



NEW YORK YANKEES

American League East



10684
FRANCHISE WINS

82-80
2023 SEASON

4th
DIVISION

#21
FARM SYSTEM RANK

New York City, NY - Yankee Stadium (46,537)
Manager: Aaron Boone (509-361, 7th Season)

Forgetting the 2023 Bronx Bummers

Don't look now, but it's been well over a decade since the Bronx Bombers hoisted the World Series trophy or even appeared in the Fall Classic and last season was their worst since the year before their last championship in 2009. A combination of age and injuries led to a 10-year low in runs and only the 112-loss Oakland Athletics had fewer hits than New York. When the dust settled, the Yankees found themselves in fourth in the AL East, a place they hadn't been since 1992 when the division had 7 teams. The once feared "Evil Empire" of baseball has consistently missed on free agent signings in recent years, and, outside of Aaron Judge, the home-grown prospects who have found success in New York have been few and far between. Will the reinforcements added in 2024 be able to change the trajectory of this team?

Batting

Yes, the Yankees have missed on free agent signings in recent years (see: Josh Donaldson, Joey Gallo, Corey Kluber, and J.A. Happ, to name a few), but **Juan Soto** is about as sure of a bet as there is. The Yankees traded with the Padres to acquire one of the best pure hitters in the game. It's a one year rental as this is Soto's contract year, but if he lives up to his own high expectations, he could become the highest-paid Yankee of all time. New York also made a rare trade with rival Boston for **Alex Verdugo** who joins Soto in the outfield. Of course, **Aaron Judge**, will occupy center. Injuries cost him nearly 60 games last season and he didn't come close to replicating his historic MVP campaign of 2022. But, he still mashed 37 home runs in just 367 plate appearances and his OPS topped 1.000 for the third time in his career. The difference between the Yankee's offense was night and day when he was in the lineup so it's critical that he stay healthy in 2024 like he did in 2021 and 2022. With Soto, Judge, and Verdugo in the outfield, **Giancarlo Stanton** will fill the designated hitter role almost exclusively. Although he hit 24 home runs, his 2023 season was otherwise a complete disaster and he posted a career-worst .191 batting average.

DJ LeMahieu didn't fare all that much better. After leading the majors in batting average in 2020, he too suffered through his career-worst season with a .243 average and an OPS+ that was below league average. His defense remained strong, however, and he split time between mostly first and third in 2023. **Anthony Rizzo** suffered a concussion on May 28 that wasn't fully diagnosed until August and he missed significant time. The expectation is that he will be fully healthy in 2024 which is great news for the team in pinstripes. **Anthony Volpe's** MLB debut was highly anticipated but the results were mixed. He displayed great power but was a consistent strikeout candidate and his slash line was just .209/.283/.383. However, his defense was simply superb and he won a gold glove. If he takes the next step at the plate, he'll become a badly needed young centerpiece for this franchise moving forward. **Austin Wells** will have a chance to join that category. **Jasson Dominguez** is another young Yankee to watch, but he will be sidelined with an elbow injury until at least this summer. **Gleyber Torres** was a rare bright spot offensively in 2023 and **Trent Grisham** will contribute off the bench as a part of the Soto deal.

Pitching

While the Yankees as a team were wildly inconsistent, **Gerrit Cole** was remarkably dominant, claiming his first Cy Young Award after finishing in the top five in voting on five separate occasions. His 2.63 ERA led the American League and his 0.981 WHIP led the majors. Somehow, even into his 30s and despite the pressure of pitching for the Yankees, Cole has only gotten better and he almost never misses a start. The Yankees added **Marcus Stroman** to the rotation who is coming off a 2023 All-Star appearance. **Carlos Rodón** was an All-Star for the Chicago White Sox in 2021 and for the San Francisco Giants in 2022. For the Yankees in 2023, he was a completely different pitcher, and not in a good way. Injuries had a lot to do with it, but he saw his ERA balloon up to 6.85. Considering that the Yankees spent \$162 million on the now 31-year-old, there's certainly cause for concern if he can't quickly return to form. The back end of the rotation has some questions too with **Clarke Schmidt** and **Nestor Cortes** as the likely candidates to fill the last two starting roles.

The Yankee bullpen was the best in the majors last season, posting a 3.34 ERA. A couple key pieces from that group have moved on but this still figures to be a strong group with **Jonathan Loáisiga** as a very capable set-up man and **Clay Holmes** assuming the full-time closing role. If the Yankees get quality pitching out of newly acquired lefty **Victor González**, the bullpen will remain one of baseball's best.

The Bottom Line


The Yankees have never been afraid to spend money and the 2024 offseason was no exception. The trade of Juan Soto has a chance to completely revolutionize this offense, but there are still injury concerns in some key areas as Yankee hitters like LeMahieu, Rizzo, and Stanton continue to age. If there are injuries, depth is a concern. The pitching staff should be strong so it's not as if the offense has to be the best in the majors for the Yankees to have success. If the hitters can get away from a "home run or bust mentality", this team will be better for it. Improvement is quite possible even in a highly competitive division and the Yankees should grab a Wild Card spot in the postseason.

2024 Projection: 89-73, 2nd in AL East

Aaron Judge



Photo via San Diego Union Tribune



2023 MLB Ranks
 RPG - 4.15 (25th)
 HITS - 1207 (29th)
 HR - 219 (9th)
 ERA - 3.97 (10th)
 SO - 1439 (12th)
 FD% - .984% (19th)

